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Vivisection
Pamphlet
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Caird, Mona Vivisection; an Appeal to the Workers

VIVISECTION.

AN APPEAL TO THE WORKERS.

By Mona Caird.

(*Reprinted from the* Labour Leader).

I AM very glad to have an opportunity in the columns of the *Labour Leader* to plead the cause of the most friendless and defenceless creatures alive—I mean the miserable victims of vivisection. I am too well aware that the cause is an unpopular one. Either the practice is openly defended, as justifiable and "scientific," or the subject is thrust aside as unpleasant or unimportant, and people go on their way ignoring, or deliberately supporting cruelties such as the Inquisition itself has nothing to surpass, or indeed to equal. I know, too, that people are ready to excuse the practice of slowly torturing animals to death, on the ground that it is our custom to kill them for food. I should like to know what the condemned criminal would say or feel if he were to be told on his day of execution that since his fellow-men thought it justifiable to take his life, because he had made insecure the lives of others, they saw no reason why they should not let the vivisectors come and cut him up alive in the interests of science and humanity. Would *he* fail to see a difference between death and torture?

Whatever may be said for or against inflicting a swift death on criminal men, or on innocent animals, it is mere evasion to pretend to place it on a level with torture. The very laws of warfare—itself a survival of savagery—recognise the difference. What would be said of our English troops if they were found making interesting physiological experiments upon their prisoners? Should we accept the excuse if they pleaded that since they were permitted to kill their enemies, they thought there could be no objection to their torturing them? Yet this is the excuse that many people accept from the vivisector.

Vivisection Pamphlet

Obviously we all recognise clearly enough, *when it suits us*, the gigantic difference between killing and torturing. Yet vivisectors, desiring to find an excuse for their ghastly work, persuade us—I daresay they persuade themselves—that there is no difference worth mentioning. Professor Huxley even goes so far as to urge that since urchins sometimes impale frogs on spikes for fun, it is very hard on the man of science if we object to his having the same satisfaction for his own particular object.* But the food argument is the favourite one with vivisectors. They know how ingrained are the flesh-eating instincts of men, and are well aware that if only they can hook on their chariot to the butcher's cart—to put the matter crudely—their beloved practice will be safe from interference for many a long year. Sport is another sanctuary for the ingenious vivisectionist. He runs there for shelter on the least alarm, and often manages to persuade the indolent public that really *he* is the truly humane and benevolent person, while his opponents are ridiculous, inconsistent, and most ignorant agitators, bent on checking the advances of science, and on depriving humanity of the discoveries which these physiologists are busy making through their researches among the nerves of living animals. Meanwhile the published official reports show that these experiments, especially the very painful ones, are increasing in number, at an alarming rate, every year. Most people are overawed by the word science. It sounds sublime ; it sounds beneficent. So, indeed, it *is*, if people would recognise that science, like art or any other pursuit of man, must submit to limit its operations to those that can be performed by legitimate means. What should we say if an artist, because he rightly regarded his art as of great importance to humanity, considered, therefore, that it was justifiable to have a man crucified in order to enable him to paint a thoroughly good picture of the Crucifixion ? This is what is recorded of a painter at, (I think), Florence, in the middle ages, when art was worshipped as science is worshipped among us now. The ruler of the city ,one of the Medici, I believe, provided him with the necessary model, and had the wretched man crucified, while the painter eagerly watched and sketched every line of his anguished face.

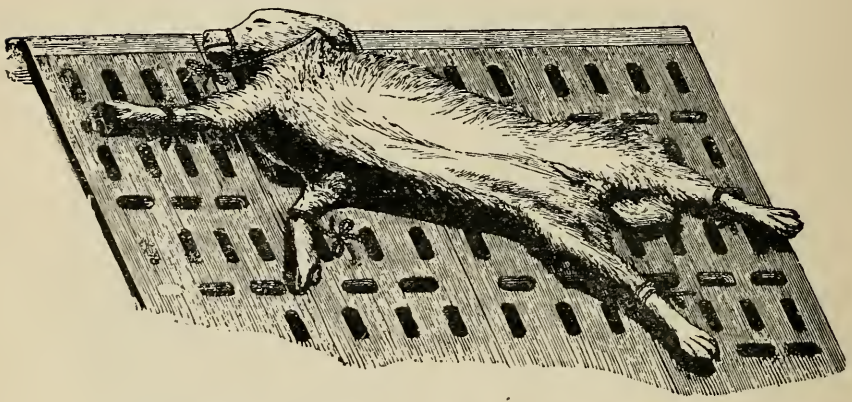
* *Science and Education*, Professor Huxley.

Now this pursuit of an object, *good in itself*, be it remembered, entirely regardless of the rights or the suffering of others, is precisely the spirit which makes the vivisector demand of the nation sentient victims for his operations. In other words, a lawful end is pursued by unlawful means. I mean unlawful *morally*, not legally, for, alas, the law of England at this moment makes legal in the judicial sense that which is unlawful in the moral sense ; and not only this, it makes legal that which it *has itself previously declared to be illegal*, viz. : cruelty to animals. There exists an Act which punishes such cruelty when practised by the poor and ignorant; there is another Act overruling the former one, and providing special licences for the same actions when performed, for special objects, by the influential and learned.

At about the same epoch at which the Florentine painter was assisted by the ruling powers to obtain a model for his picture of the Crucifixion, the physiologist was also indulged in the same thoughtful manner. There is a poem on this subject by Lee Hamilton, which is full of significance to all who realise the sinister and perilous nature of this practice which is gaining ground so fast all over the world. In this poem, a poor young fellow, who has been enticed by a learned vivisector into his laboratory and there drugged, wakes up bewildered, to find himself bound hand and foot on a vivisecting table, while beside him a dog, that has just been tortured, lies moaning in his trough. The Professor stands over his victim coldly and judicially. He is on the eve of an important discovery, or so he believes. He longs to outdo his rival, Fallopius, who has been engaged in cutting up a dozen or so of prisoners delivered over to him by the Duke of Florence for the purpose of research. The captive, relieved to see a human being, calls for help. But the Professor says not a word. The dead silence of the underground place gives a sense of terror. Then the Professor goes quietly to fetch his instruments. The poor pinioned wretch thinks that he is to be put to the torture, according to the custom of those days, in order to make him confess something to the authorities, and he yells out that he will reveal everything, though, miserable creature, he has nothing to reveal!

Then the Professor, who until then has been lost in thought, and as inattentive to his captive's appeals as to "the fitful moaning of the dog," suddenly exclaims, half to himself:—

"Reveal? ay, that thou shalt.
Thou shalt reveal inestimable truths
Of which thou knowest nothing—
Thou shalt confirm what these dumb dogs have told
Beneath the scalpel; thou shalt be the last
And chiefest witness——"



"*The last and chiefest witness.*" Who can miss the significance of those words? Who can fail to recognise the irresistible nature of the temptation that such an opportunity must be to a man who had spent his life in such researches? How, indeed, could he *help* desiring to find out whether the results of his experiments on animals were also true for the human being? He would be a fool if he did not desire it, for nobody knows better than he that experiments on animals give no real information as to the constitution of men. And if he had taken it as settled that an important scientific object excuses the use of cruel means, would he not naturally argue that an important scientific object excuses the torture of an unimportant human being, whose anguish might, perhaps, be made to bring health to thousands? If the vivisector be logical, that is the conclusion that he must come to, and those who have supported him in animal vivisection have no business to object when he begins to carry his experiments a little unpleasantly near home. The man is logical. If the end justifies atrocious means, it *does* justify them, and there is an end of it: to decide exactly *how* atrocious, is idle and impossible,

logically considered; we cannot reasonably back out of the principle merely because the application does not happen to suit us personally.

Now there are vivisectional laboratories in the medical schools attached to nearly all the principal hospitals, and the operator must have often come straight from the torture-trough of some moaning brute to the bedside of his patient. What is likely to be the result of such a combination of circumstances? The recent exposures of wholesale vivisection of patients in the Chelsea Hospital for Women give us a fair idea of that result. It is now well known that human vivisection, of greater or less severity, has been going on in hospitals for years. The doctors speak of their patients as clinical material, and one doctor wrote a long letter, saying that such practice was necessary for the training and progress of the profession, and the public was invited to subscribe more liberally to the hospitals in order to compensate the patients for having to be used in that way! *

What else, indeed, are we to expect if we train a large body of clever and influential men to believe that their important scientific end justifies atrocious means? They learn their lesson well and better the instruction.

Dr. Hoggan, who has had intimate acquaintance with vivisectional laboratories, warns us against the erroneous and common belief of so many that when anæsthetics are stated to be given the animal suffers no pain from the experiment. He tells us that it is almost impossible to give an animal chloroform to deaden its feeling, without killing it. Although so well trained in administering chloroform at the hospital, he found it was not to be done. He also reminds us that an immense number of experiments *could* not be performed under an anæsthetic without entirely vitiating results, for instance, those on the nerves and on sensation, and he warns us also that *narcotics* which stupefy the creature but do not destroy feeling are constantly given, and accepted by the public as true anæsthetics. In short, the doctor considers anæsthetics "the greatest curse to vivisectible animals," because they tend to soothe the feelings of the public rather than of the

* Dr. De Watteville, in a letter to the *Standard*, Nov, 24th, 1883.

animals, and to make them continue to support the atrocities of vivisection.—*The Spectator*, May 29th, 1875.

"But then——," says the author of the pamphlet entitled "Five Questions to Working Men about Vivisection" (London: Anti-Vivisection Society, 32, Sackville Street, W.) "these vivisectors tell us that their practices are not cruel, that they are humane, tender-hearted Christian men, who would not be guilty of any act of cruelty. Well, is it cruel to take a number of dogs, to burn and scald them to death by pouring boiling hot water on different parts of their body, several times in succession, or by covering them with turpentine and setting fire to it? * Vivisectors have done this.

Is it cruel to cut open the stomach of a dog, to insert the ear of a live rabbit and fasten it there until it was eaten away by the gastric juice of the dog's stomach? † Vivisectors have done this. Is it cruel to open the bellies of cats, cut away some of their intestines, slice off parts of their livers, and leave them to die after intense suffering lasting over twenty-three days? ‡ Vivisectors have done this. Is it cruel to saw open the skull of a monkey, cut into some part of its brain, thrust red-hot wires into the opening, inject acids of various kinds into the cavities, and keep it alive in this state for weeks or months? § Vivisectors have done this. This, aye! and worse than this, if it is possible to conceive, and when forced from their own writings to admit the truth of these details they have defended themselves by saying that animals do not feel pain as we do, that their struggles are mere automatic movements, and that an animal which under experiment screamed, turned its head round and bit and gnawed its own legs, lashed its tail, uttered

* Royal Commission Report—Dr. Carpenter, Question 5616.

† It was found on referring to Dr. Noë Walker's evidence before the Royal Commission, which has been consulted for purposes of verification, that he asserted that "the posterior half of a living frog was inserted into the aperture leading to the stomach of the dog," etc., instead of the "ear of a live rabbit." The author of the "Five Questions" has probably been quoting part of a different experiment of the same nature: the mistake is unessential, but I mention it in order that the quotations in this paper may be unimpeachably accurate in every detail, and that I may myself be able to vouch for their accuracy.

‡ Roy. Com. Rep., Dr. Legg, pp. 372, 373, also 256, 257.

§ Experiments by Dr. Ferrier, Roy. Com. Rep., p. 220, pp. 166-169 Reports of Wakefield Lunatic Asylum, Appendix to Roy. Com. Rep.

long-continued cries, "felt no more real pain than a piano does when its keys are struck?" * These are the statements of English vivisectors. (The above experiments were all admitted by the vivisectors to have been performed by them, and are mentioned in the reports of the Royal Commission on Vivisection.)

And now let us return for a moment to our Florentine youth in the hands of his learned tormentor. The youth has bitten the Professor's thumb, in his mad terror and fury. The Professor rejoices that it is the left thumb, and that the experiment need not be postponed. He gags the victim, and proceeds with his work, muttering:—

"He bites, he bites, methinks he almost barked.
Oh, who shall draw the line between this man—
This human animal—who nothing knows
Of what makes man immortal, and this dog?
That he can shriek for mercy? and the dog,
Hath he not shrieked for mercy long and loud?
That he can call on an unhelpful God?
So doth the dog, perchance, if we but knew.
That he hath got a soul? I doubt it much:
But granting for a moment that he hath,
He's by so much the luckier than the dog,
Who suffers and relapses into nought."

He pauses and regards the captive, reflecting on the situation. Who is to forbid this deed that he is doing?

"'Tis God, perchance? Then let him first restrain
The dark destructive forces he has made,
. . . . and put an end
To Nature's countless crimes; or is it Man,
And Man alone? He strews his battlefields
Year after year with heaps of mangled dead,
Without a why or wherefore. . . .
. . . . Shall he dare
To grudge me what I need—a single life
For Science, for the only thing I love
On this wide earth? And do I not deserve
To be at last rewarded? I, whose life
Has been one boundless sacrifice——?
And such a life as mine—
Is it to be cheated of its sole reward
To save the squeaks of such a thing as this?
. . . . . .
Is not all Nature framed upon the plan
Of strength devouring weakness? Shall I be
More kind than Nature? He is in my hands:
. . . . . .

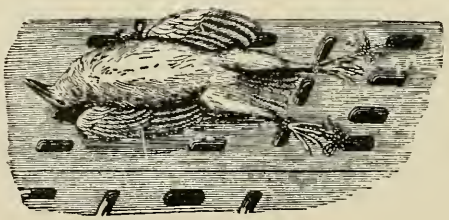
* Roy. Com. Rep., Dr. Crichton Browne, Qn. 4444.

And if Mankind should ever learn this deed,
Would it avenge it for the victim's sake,
Or from its own intolerable fear
Of a like fate ? *Would it avenge the dog*
Who lies on yonder table ? O, Mankind,
Thy charity is great ! And now to work."

I repeat the Professor's cynical question, but not cynically: would Mankind avenge the dog who lies on yonder table ? Not *would* Mankind, but *will* Mankind arise, as it *can* arise, and say: In my name no defenceless creature shall be tortured; *no* end shall be held to justify devilish means. Man is stronger and cleverer than the animals; therefore, every law of honour, of justice, of chivalry, of manhood, places them under the protection of man.

For these defenceless ones I plead. Sad, indeed, will be the day when the cause of the oppressed proves to be a hopeless cause on English soil. Only the people of England can right this awful wrong. They can express their wishes through their votes, through making this a political question and returning no member to Parliament who supports scientific torture.

By no other means can we hope to put an end to the unspeakable suffering of dumb creatures, with all its ghastly and certain consequences. I remind my readers once more of their own imminent danger: of the peril that increases every year—as vivisection increases—for all who may have to venture inside a hospital; but I appeal, first and foremost, to their justice and their pity, and I cannot, *dare* not believe that I shall appeal altogether in vain.



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